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A Maid by Any Other Name



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Chapter 1 by SaintSayaka

She picked up her master's clothing from the ground, careful to not make eye contact with him as she did so. It wouldn't have really mattered - he was clearly snoring, and was in no state to acknowledge her presence.

But the girl in the bed with him was.

Maybe she was another maid. The castle was so large that Flora couldn't be bothered to remember or learn how many of her ilk there were running about, fixing dinners and emptying chamber pots. Either way, she didn't want to be involved in the business. Her master was no longer a boy. He could sleep with whomever he pleased, so long as his father never found out. Clearly, however, the girl was not going to let her go in silence.

"What's your name?" she abruptly asked, pulling the bed's sheets to cover her naked chest.

Chapter 2 by Pentavalence



Flora drew back, muttering her name and a quick "Sorry to disturb you, miss."

The girl, however, was not going to let her go that easily. "Flora, I like that name. I'm Annabel." She smiled. That was odd. The other girl with had seemed abashed, ashamed. This one was different.

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Flora gave a quick curtsy and hurried out of the room. "Wait!" Annabel's voice was warped and distorted through the thick wood door. Flora hurried on, wanting to escape from the awkward scene.

However, this was not her last meeting with Annabel...

Chapter 3 by River Mermaid



A few days later, Flora was sweeping up threads on the floor of the seamstresses' room. A few of them were extremely beautiful, metallic, bright, and ornamental. One of these threads lie in front of her was one of such strings. The shimmering bronze thread was laced with a fine tinsel, and seemed to go on forever. Flora hooked the end of the thread around her index and middle fingers and wrapped it up. The thread wound past the area she was bent over, so she walked forward as she wrapped it up.

When she reached the end of her thread, she felt a tug.

Annabel.

"Hello, Flora! I've been looking for you!", She smiled.

"Hello, miss. I am deeply sorry about the other day. I truly should've left.", Flora responded, eager to get out of her current situation. She began to walk off...

"Wait, please don't leave! I want to show you something!", Annabel shouted.

Flora returned to the site of the social miss.

Annabel lifted her trumpet sleeve to show her bracelet, a simple chain with a charm marked with a symbol.

Flora dropped her spool of thread.

The mark of a servant.

Chapter 4 by TeTe



"You--you're---but you--"

Flora couldn't say the words. She had seen Annabel laying on the bed with her master looking as if she belong there. She talked to Flora with such ease and politeness that Flora couldn't believe.

"You're a servant girl?"

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Flora half-whispered half-cried. The words were coming from her mouth. She couldn't believe what she had seen and was seeing now.

"But you---and the master---and you---"

"Breathe Flora. No one ever told you it's not polite to stare and stutter."

Annabel was mocking her. She was sitting here, on the floor mocking her as if she were much more than Flora. She was just another servant girl and just as all the others master had slept with she would be pushed to the side when master was bored.

At that moment Flora became angry. Angry with herself for not having an answer to Annabel. Who did she think she was?

"Never STAY in OUR master's BED like you did. As a servant girl you must serve and never been seen, heard or noticed. Now put yourself in your place and I do believe you have chores to do."

Flora said that with all her might, turned and walked out of the seamstresses' room. She noticed that Annabel had wanted to answer her out Flora gave her no attention.

As the day passed and Flora completed her chores all she could think about was how insulgent that servant girl was. Try as she might Annabel would always be just that, a servant. Imagine if a plain girl such as her, with no noble blood would ever grow to be anything. Angry as she was, Flora couldn't help but feel somewhat jealous. Was Annabel more beautiful than her? Did Annabel have some quality that could have awakened such desire in master? Why was herself, Flora, always treated as a shadow by the master? She had served the master since they both were 12 years old. They had almost grown up together. Master would even ask Flora to play cricket with him when the mistress wasn't watching.

As Flora fought with herself she hadn't noticed she had stopped sweeping and that the governess was right in front of her, staring harshly.

Chapter 5 by Sarah May Vigue-Cortez



Flora gasped and dropped her broom in on her attempt to stand with attentiveness. The governess's glare burned holes into the back of flora's neck as she bent to pick up the wooden handle.

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stood silently within only inches of her. Animosity seemed to be seething from the governess's bulky frame." Well" Flora thought with a sigh of relief "at least it's not me the Witch is looking to grill.. For once." "WHACK"

the tense silence was broken by the Governess's hand hitting Anabel across the face.

Flora gasped in complete and utter amazement. The governess pointed a finger in the girl's face. "You think you are something, don't you, little princess?" The Ugly woman performed the last word in a shrill mocking tone. "You won't be much of anything soon." Her face and voice consumed with spite. " Just wait til you have been booted out of here. You will be living in the gutter with the rest of the used woman." she spat. "Ha. Princess Harlet, you can call your self."

Completely dumbfounded by the Governess's lack of composure Flora dropped the broom and again its wooden handle hit the floor snapping the crazed woman back into awareness of the world around here. She turned Floras way with a start, cleared her throat straightening the small tie around the high collared neck on her grey dress. "What are you looking at, slack jawed imbecile? Get back to work" She said then strolled off with the returned dignified grace expected of a woman of her status.

Flora recovered snapped her mouth closed and looked back to Anabel who raised a shaking hand to the already crimson side of her face Tears spilling down between her fingers. She and Flora stood there for a long moment, Flora looked at Anabel and could not help but to feel for this girl. In fact upon looking at her she came to realize there was nothing offensive about the tall lass, except possibly her looks which were almost strange but beautiful as well. She looked to Flora at that moment like a wounded deer. Lonely and scared. She has to be younger than me thought Flora but not by much. before Flora had a chance to speak the sound of approaching footsteps sent Flora fleeing quickly, she certainly had work to do elsewhere and surely did not wish another encounter with the Misses. Anabel's sobs quietly grew distant with each step Flora took. She couldn't bare to look back. Until she caught the muffled tones of a man amidst the sobs. Flora stopped in her tracks and strained her ears. Yes, she had no doubt now Twas surely the voice of her master there hushing and consoling the weeping girl behind her.

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She found herself growing red and walking even faster. She bunched her apron in her hands and turned into the floor's washroom. Hastily, she grabbed a rag and bucket from the cabinet hidden behind the door. It was hidden where the master would not find it, for the servants were to be ghosts in the castle, and he was to live a life of ignorant luxury. She filled the, and began scrubbing the floor with vigor.

She was so engrossed in scouring the floor of any dirt that she didn't hear the sobs and low male tones coming closer and closer to her. She heard a sharp intake of breath and looked up. Her master, tall and handsome, was standing before her holding the hand of the Annabel girl.

They were all silent for a few seconds before Flora realized what a compromising position she was in and stood rapidly. She gave a stiff curtsy and apologized in a murmur, her eyes directed at the ground.

"There is no need to apologize, Ms. Flora, you were simply doing your duty," said her Master quietly. From the very top of her vision she could see a pensive expression on his face, lips tight and eyebrows furrowed.

"Of course, sir, if you'll excuse me..."

Without making eye contact, Flora speedily put away the cleaning supplies and half-walked, half-sprinted from the room. Of all the times for her master to see her in distress, it had to be when that blasted girl was there!

She couldn't help thinking of his eyes, however. The soft brown seemed to meet her again for the first time, like a long-forgotten flame that no one cared to put out. She couldn't help remembering that his eyes had burned.

Chapter 7 by Sarah May Vigue-Cortez



Flora did not see her Master nor Anabel again for nearly a fortnight. The keep had been in frantic haste to prepare for the coming of the Lord and Lady of Goldtown the neighboring corner of the Kingdom. And though Flora's Governess Vivian of Riverrock certainly thought very highly of herself, Lord and Lady Bree were considered quite a big deal here in her keep. The couple were a great conquest to Vivian in her ambitions to raise her family's station. So even she must humble herself and be the dancing bear if you will. So though she was worked

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Flora had a small smirk on her face as she imagined what ridiculous thing Lady Bree would demand of the Governess this visit. "What is it keeping you in such good spirits among all this chaos and chores?" Flora halted and her body stiffened before she could maintain the aloofness she had seconds before. She turned to be once again under the direct gaze of her Masters brown eyes.

Chapter 8 by CatLover



The smile slid of Flora's face. "N-nothing, I j-just felt h-happy today?" She stuttered.

Her Master didn't look convinced.

"I'll just leave you..." Flora began to hurry away.

"No-stop!" Something in her Master's voice made her turn around.

"Y-yes, Master?"

"Something is troubling you. Don't deny it, I know you well."

Heat rushed to Flora's cheeks.

"Flora, you can tell me."

Suddenly, Flora felt angry at her Master. "Fine, Master! Why are you using someone younger than you? Why is she a servant? Why are you letting her hang on to you? The longer she stays with you, the more it will hurt her when you abandon her just like all the other women!" Flora gasped. 'What have I done!?' She thought to herself. 'He'll dismiss me on the spot now!' She looked at her feet, shame washing over her. "I'm so sorry, Master, it just slipped out..."

Flora's Master scrutinised her. "Alright. Firstly, you must stop with this 'Master' thing. I want to be called by my real name. It's Edward."

Flora's head snapped up and she forgot about her outburst for a moment. "What? You can't possibly be serious, Mas..."

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"Edward! And yes, I am, Y..."

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Flora couldn't disobey direct orders, so she answered, "Yes, Edward?"

"Good." Edward's face darkened. "Now to your accusation. Flora, I have never loved any of the women that have stayed with me."

"You...you what?"

"Of course not! The King wants the royal bloodline to continue."

Realisation hit Flora. "He wants you to..."

"Yes. I need a child. My father chooses out women, and majority of them aren't royal, he just picks them for their beauty, and pretends they're a princess. Which brings me to Annabel. She's not royal, it's true, and yes, she is younger than me. But my father isn't interested in a child anymore. He thinks I'm nearing an age where I won't be able to find a wife."

Flora made to interrupt, but Edward cut her off. "He's been generous, letting me choose a wife, as long as she isn't hideous in his eyes. Well, Annabel, I believe she loves me, and though I don't love her, she's a good friend to me. I think, after marriage, I may grow to love her the same way she loves me. I don't have any other choice. The girl I truly love doesn't love me the same way. Ironic, isn't it?"

Flora took a second to process all this. "You love someone else?"

"Of course I do!" Edward laughed. "Haven't you noticed the way I look at her? I thought I was being obvious!"

"If you don't mind my asking...who is it?" Flora said curiously.

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